

Forging partnerships between science and policy: A high-level AMR event

An event co-hosted by the Global Leaders Group (GLG) on AMR and the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID)

Barcelona, Spain, 26 April, 2024

For the second successive year, the GLG and ESCMID co-hosted a high-level event on AMR at which government leaders, policymakers and scientists from around the world came together to discuss the need for strong partnerships between policy makers and researchers to develop solutions to the growing crisis of antimicrobial resistance.

Speakers highlighted the need for evidence-based, outcome-oriented targets to drive further action in the AMR response across sectors, and noted the GLG's recent recommendations to help address the pipeline and access crisis for antimicrobials and diagnostics. Speakers also proposed ways to capitalize on the year's opportunities to galvanize global progress on AMR, including the upcoming UN General Assembly (UNGA) High-Level Meeting (HLM) on AMR in September 2024.

Welcome and keynote speakers

ESCMID president Professor Annelies Zinkernagel welcomed scientists, clinicians, policymakers, government officials, and other colleagues. She emphasized that the silent pandemic of AMR is one of the foremost challenges in global public health and the need for science to inform political action on AMR.

Dr Chris Fearne, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for European Funds, Social Dialogue and Consumer Protection of Malta and Vice Chair of the Global Leaders Group on AMR, contextualized the impact of AMR, noting its significant impact on life expectancy, the growing proportion of resistant hospital-acquired infections, and the slow development of novel antimicrobials. Dr Fearne highlighted the upcoming UNGA HLM on AMR as an important opportunity for progress in financing, accountability, targets, and awareness raising.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, emphasized the importance of multisectoral action on AMR, informed by science and linked to sound policies and interventions. He noted that in advance of the September UNGA HLM on AMR, the 77th World Health Assembly will discuss WHO strategic priorities to address AMR in human health. WHO is also proposing targets for consideration at the HLM.

Dr Antonio López Navas, Deputy Director of the Spanish Agency for Medicines and Medical Devices, highlighted Spain's progress in reducing antibiotic use in the human and animal sectors and through stewardship programs. He endorsed the One Health approach to AMR and the need for strengthened leadership to prevent a fragmented response.

Setting evidence and outcome-oriented targets for actions to drive change across sectors

Dr Zinkernagel and GLG member Professor António Fernando Correia de Campos, Professor Emeritus at the National School of Public Health at the New University of Lisbon, chaired the first panel and welcomed the panellists.

Professor Correia de Campos discussed the different drivers behind evidence generation and political decision making, as well as current gaps and opportunities in the global AMR response. He highlighted the escalating burden of AMR as documented in the GLG economic study, which showed that without a stronger response, there will be an average loss of life expectancy of 1.8 years globally and AMR will cost the world an additional \$855 billion dollars annually in extra healthcare costs and lost productivity.

Her Excellency Beatrice Atim Odwong Anywar, Minister of State for the Environment in Uganda and a member of the GLG, shared the GLG's recent report outlining 10 recommendations for specific, time-bound, and responsible commitments for action in the AMR response. Ms Anywar emphasized the importance of engaging politicians at all levels to build understanding and support.

Professor Jesús Rodríguez-Baño, Professor of Medicine at the University of Seville and former President of ESCMID, highlighted the need for more robust data systems and indicators at global, national, and local levels to inform evaluations of AMR burden and improve patient outcomes.

Panel discussions focused on education and awareness-raising efforts as important components of the AMR response, and the continued effort to refine the One Health approach.

Addressing the pipeline and access crisis for antibiotics and diagnostics

GLG member Ms Sunita Narain, Director-General, Centre for Science and Environment in India, and Dr Robert Leo Skov, ESCMID President-elect and Secretary -General, chaired the second panel and welcomed the panelists.

GLG member Professor Onyebuchi Chukwu outlined global trends contributing to the pipeline and access crisis, and shared the six recommendations of the GLG to address it in human health, as discussed in the recent GLG report. Professor Chukwu emphasized the need for predictable, long-term financing, complementary interventions, and coordination and cooperation.

Dr Erin Duffy, Chief of Research and Development at CARB-X, explained the financial and other mechanisms behind the crisis of innovation in the pharmaceutical sector. Dr Duffy summarized recent achievements of CARB-X as an example of a successful push mechanism to address the pipeline crisis, but noted that both push and pull incentives are needed, and solutions to this crisis must address the issues of access, stewardship, and innovation.

Panel discussions touched on an array of topics including the importance of prevention, alternatives to antimicrobials and diagnostics; cost and other access barriers to novel antibiotics; humanizing the consequences of AMR, and the role of regulation.

Road to UNGA High-Level Meeting on AMR

Dr Jean Pierre Nyemazi, Director ad interim of the Quadripartite Joint Secretariat on AMR, presented updates on the recent work of the Quadripartite organizations (FAO, UNEP, WHO, WOA), including findings from the recent economic case for investment into AMR. Dr Nyemazi also discussed developments regarding the UNGA HLM on AMR: the modalities document has been adopted and negotiations on the content of the political declaration are beginning. A multistakeholder hearing will take place on 15 May 2024 and the UNGA HLM on AMR will take place on 26 September 2024. The Fourth Ministerial Conference on AMR in November 2024 in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will be an opportunity to translate policy into action. Dr Nyemazi also mentioned the Quadripartite Key Messages for the UNGA HLM on AMR, which relate to effective governance, adequate financing, transformed systems, actionable targets, strengthened surveillance, and the pipeline and access crisis. He emphasized the need for a united global united voice to move the AMR response forward.

Dr Robert Leo Skov introduced a petition for ESCMID members and partners to sign and send to their respective ministers or influential politicians, to help mobilize political attention and demand engagement for a strong UNGA resolution with ambitious commitments and concrete actions.

GLG member Professor Dame Sally Davies, Special Envoy on AMR for the United Kingdom, emphasized the urgency and high stakes of the global AMR threat and the importance of the upcoming UNGA HLM on AMR, and encouraged ESCMID members to sign and disseminate the ESCMID petition to the highest levels of their governments.

The GLG-ESCMID high-level event AMR event continues to facilitate effective collaboration and multi-disciplinary partnerships between scientists, clinicians, and policymakers to guide informed action in the global AMR response and ensure the world's future access to effective antimicrobials.